

Ethnic Studies

Colloquium, Monday, February 10th, 1:00-2:00 p.m., INTN 3023:

“The Mer-Warrior: A Fantastic Afro-Nostalgic”



In contrast to mainstream representations of the mermaid as an innocent, hyperfeminine girl-culture waif, a hypersexualized, commercialized object, or, more rarely, a tempting, predatory, carnivorous siren, Black mermaid stories, narratives, and performers offer entirely different dimensions to this fantastical figure that are remarkably consistent across literary, visual, and other popular culture. Building upon Badia Ahad-Legardy’s concept of afro-nostalgia, this presentation will focus on the mermaid as a warrior figure, and the way in which Black storytellers and creatives center the kinds of histories usually used to exclude blackness from fantasy landscapes—captivity, enslavement, and ongoing racial violence—as actually especially entitling Black communities to mermaid stories.



•**Jalondra A. Davis**, Assistant Professor of English at UC Riverside, has published on speculative fiction in various venues, including *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, *Science Fiction Studies*, *Misrepresentations of Black Womanhood*, *Routledge Anthology of Co-Futurisms*, and *Los Angeles Review of Books*. Her monograph manuscript, *Merfolk and Black Being in Water*, analyzes the historically specific worldbuilding of Black literature, art, and performance featuring human-aquatic hybrids, with a focus on how such narratives interrogate Western modernity, humanism, and the Anthropocene. A current Hellman Society of Scholars Fellow with an Ethnic Studies Ph.D. from UCR, she also hosts the Merwomanist Podcast.